THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): (a) and (b) To tackle fluoride and brackish contamination in drinking water, during the period 1994-95 to 1997-98, under Sub-Mission Programme of ARWSP, 83 projects were sanctioned to different States at a total cost of about Rs. 944 crore, out of which Government of India's share is about Rs. 709 crore. Out of these 83 projects, 20 projects are reported to have been completed; and the rest are at different stages of implementation.

Rural Drinking Water Supply is a State subject. State Government implement rural drinking water supply schemes from their own resources. Government of India supplements their efforts by providing funds under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) and Rural Drinking Water component of Prime Minister's Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY). As reported by the State Governments, as on 1.4.1999, there are 2,17,211 rural habitations are affected with various quality problems in the country, out of of which 36,988 habitations are affected with fluoride contamination, 32,597 habitations with brackishness and the remaining are affected with other quality problems. A fresh survey is presently being carried out to assess the number of habitations affected by various quality problems.

Since 1.4.1998, powers to plan, approve and implement schemes/projects under Sub-Mission have been delegated to the States under ARWSP. Under Rural Drinking Water component of PMGY, the States can also plan, approve and implement schemes/projects to provide safe drinking water in quality affected habitations, which *inter alia* includes habitations affected with fluoride contamination and brackish water.

Nabbing of Brigand Veerappan

*428. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the latest position with regard to the nabbing/arrest of brigand Veerappan and his jungle followers;

(b) whether State Governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have recently sought any kind of assistance from Union Government in this regard particularly after activising a task force by new Tamil Nadu Government;

(c) if so, details thereof and Government's reaction thereto;

(d) if not, whether Government also propose to take any initiative in this regard in near future;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYA SAGAR RAO): (a) to (f) After the release of Dr. Rajkumar from captivity by Veerappan, the State Governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka formulated a joint strategy for the purpose of nabbing Veerappan and requested Central Government for assistance of Para-Military Forces, weapons and equipments etc. which was provided. The two State Government reactivated the Special Task Force (STF) operations assisted by the Central Para-Military Forces, combined onslaught of the STF and BSF compelled Veerappan to run from his familiar territory to a new area namely Boluvampatti Reserved Forests in Coimbatore district and Walayar Reserved Forests in Palghat District of Kerala. The gang was sighted on 02.02.2001 upon which a brief encounter took place with the police party. Unable to withstand the police firing, Veerappan and his gang escaped into the forests leaving their personal belongings behind. Maran, who is the Chief of TNLA and a prominent member of Veerappan's gang was arrested by the STF on 15.02.2001 from a place called Seethaivanam in the Boluvampatti reserved Forests of Coimbatore district. According to the State Government of Tamil Nadu, combing operations are in progress by different search parties of the STF constituted to nab Veerappan.

The State Government of Tamil Nadu has requested the Central Government to allow retention of the BSF Battalion provided by the Central Government for some more time along with services of helicopters, supply of equipments etc. Central Government has been providing all available assistance as sought by the State Governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu from time to time and the latest requests are also being dealt with appropriately.

Ban on visits of foreign intellectuals

†*429. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA:
SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently banned visits of scholars and intellectuals from foreign countries; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.